

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND ITS PERCEIVED NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE OF THE EMPLOYEES OF A BANKING CALL CENTER

ELENA-ALINA STAICU¹, MARIUS VASILUȚĂ-ȘTEFĂNESCU²

Article history: Received 16 May 2022; Revised 30 May 2022; Accepted 15 June 2022; Available online 10 August 2022; Available print 30 September 2022.

©2022 Studia UBB Sociologia. Published by Babeș-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT. Professional stress is a challenge for many companies that want to keep their employees within the organization on one hand and to ensure their performance through a comfortable working environment on the other. This study investigated and evaluated the perceptions of 14 male employees (French and Romanian speakers) working in the same banking call center in Timisoara regarding the causes and effects of work-related stress. The applicability of this study is to develop possible strategies and practices for controlling and reducing work-related stress in order to decrease the high staff turnover. The elaboration of this research is based on the concepts of occupational stress, its effects on the perceived emotional and physical health of the employees but also on their performance and motivation at work. To carry out this qualitative research, we used a semi-structured interview guide written in both Romanian and French, since half of the interviewees are Romanians, and the other half are North Africans from Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria. The main topics on which the interview guide questions were developed are the following: personal and professional experience, working schedule, work rate, performance, motivation, mental and physical health and how all the aforementioned contribute to professional mobility. The research results show that the employees performance and motivation at work are indeed affected by the perceived occupational stress, but it is not the main reason why they consider changing the current job. For most of the interviewed employees, the individual life goals, ambitions, and future projections are the ones influencing them to look for another job position after gaining the desired experience within the call centers.

Keywords: Occupational stress, Banking Call Center, Health, Motivation, Professional mobility.

¹ West University of Timisoara, Romania, Department of Sociology, elena.staicu98@e-uvt.ro

² A West University of Timisoara, Romania, Department of Sociology, marius.vasiluta@e-uvt.ro

Introduction

Call centers are one of the jobs with the highest personnel turnover rates owing to burnout (Seco, Lopes, 2013, 679). People who work in call centers, regardless of their industry, have direct phone interaction with a variety of consumers. Individual emotional exhaustion, loss of enthusiasm, and behavior characterized by indifference, dissatisfaction with workplace are usually caused by high employer expectations, inability to cope with long-term work pressure, frustration in the process of interacting with customers, but also the high workload (Cameron, Bright, Caza, 2004, 1). Through this research, we will investigate what employees of a call center in the banking industry in Timișoara think about the primary sources of occupational stress. After determining their perception on the causes and effects of occupational stress, we will attempt to offer possible solutions for effective stress management that can be implemented by both management and employees in order to reduce the high rate of staff turnover.

To carry out this qualitative research, we chose and elaborated a semi-structured interview guide composed in both Romanian and French languages. Given that 5 of the participants are of North African nationality, from Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, and do not speak Romanian fluently, we translated the interview guide into French to facilitate communication - thus, out of a total of 14 interviews, 9 were conducted in Romanian and 5 in French.

In the present article, we will initially briefly present the concept of occupational stress and its effects at both individual and organizational levels, followed by the research methodology elements, main results of the research and conclusions.

Occupational stress concept

The concept of occupational stress has been defined both widely and to a lesser degree, being referred to as a response, a stimulus, a characteristic of the environment, an individual attribute, or the interaction between an individual and his work environment (Katz and Kahn, 1978). Occupational stress can also be defined as “an employee’s reaction to characteristics at the workplace that seem mentally and physically threatening” (Jamal, 2005: 224). Whereas some sociologists would label a physiological dysfunction as stress (Ivancevich and Matteson, 1980: 5), others would rather consider it a consequence of it (Schuler, 1980: 184). Likewise, Ivancevich and Matteson categorized stress as the most inaccurate (term) in the scientific dictionary (1980: 5).

Potential effects of occupational stress

Stress is felt at any workplace, but Bakker, Demerourti, and Sanz-Vergel (2014) defined the call center as one of the most stressful work environments. This stress comes from several sources, such as abusive customers, inflexibility of working hours, lack of control of the employee over the work tasks received and his motivation. To date, previous studies have shown that stress at work contributes to the emergence of health problems among employees, but also to organizational problems such as low productivity, unmotivated absenteeism, high turnover rate of company staff, employee dissatisfaction and indifference to the needs of the organization (Beehr, Newman, 1978, 665).

Burnout is the result of chronic stress at work that has not been successfully treated and it is characterized by exhaustion and depersonalization (negativism/cynicism) and is found predominantly in the work areas which imply developing social relationships with other people (Maslach, Jackson, 1981, 99). The symptoms of burnout at the individual level are multidimensional, generating psychiatric, psychosomatic, somatic, and social disorders. Among the most common symptoms of burnout are the following: concentration and memory disorders (lack of precision, disorganization), personality changes (lack of interest, cynicism, aggression), anxiety and depressive disorders that can sometimes culminate in suicide. Exhaustion has also been associated with the development of addictions (alcohol, drugs), and somatic symptoms include headaches (migraines), gastrointestinal disorders (irritable stomach) or cardiovascular disorders such as tachycardia, arrhythmia, and hypertension (Ewald, O., 1998, 16). Studies also show that muscle tension is the most common symptom of stress, but insomnia has quickly risen to second place. Insomnia is defined as poor sleep, abnormal wakefulness, or inability to sleep and can affect anyone. Stress does not consider age, ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, or economy class and for this very reason it has been called the "equal opportunity destroyer" (Seward, Brian, 2018, 15). The fact that stress at a general level, but also occupational stress at a limited one can have negative effects on the quality of sleep of individuals is a revelation and has been frequently discussed and analyzed in the past decades. On the other hand, numerous studies have shown that a peaceful and regular sleep is essential for optimal health, and chronic insomnia is often associated with several types of psychiatric problems (Maas, J. 2001).

In recent years, occupational stress has become a concern for companies around the world seeking to improve workplace performance and employee well-being. Among the effects of occupational stress at the organizational level we can list the various costs for the days of sick leave of employees, decreased productivity or continuous recruitment in the case of jobs with high staff turnover.

Regarding the prevention of occupational stress and burnout, the literature focuses on primary prevention, and one of the measures are: testing and learning relaxation techniques suitable for each individual, delegating responsibility (learning to say “no”), practicing hobbies (sports, culture, nature walks), trying to maintain strong social relationships, prophylaxis of frustration by reducing false expectations (Enzmann and Schaufeli, 1999). Prevention measures can be implemented at both individual and organizational level. In terms of the workplace, management can use the following measures to prevent occupational stress among employees: creating a healthy work environment (for example, improving the manager-employee communication style by training managers in this regard), recognizing performance (praise, appreciation, bonuses), regular medical and psychological professional monitoring of employees, performing psychological tests on candidates throughout the recruitment process to determine if they are compatible with the job requirements.

The coping strategy is the individual’s response to stressors (Folkman, Susan, 2009), and the attention that each person pays to himself may be conditioned by the perceived level of stress (Godfrey et al. 2010). There are several types of coping strategies: primary and secondary (Lazarus et al, 1974), affective and problem-oriented (Jalowiec A and Powers M, 1981), or are described as a three-step system (Beyer and Marshall 1981). Self-help strategies for coping with stress include diaphragmatic breathing, relaxation techniques, exercise programs, prayers, hobbies, watching TV or socializing (Mancmi et al 1983).

Research methodology

As mentioned previously, we have chosen to conduct this research using the qualitative approach through the interview technique. Consequently, the tool which we developed to carry out the research is a bilingual semi-structured interview guide which aims to ease the discussions with the employees belonging to different nationalities and who have different mother tongues.

The main objective of this research is to identify the perception of the employees of a banking call center from Timișoara on the causes and effects of occupational stress in order to develop possible strategies and practices to control and reduce the level of occupational stress; the applicability consists in the decrease of the high rate of staff turnover that managers have been facing over the years in the selected workplace. In addition to the main objective of the study, we have developed other specific objectives that contribute to the achievement of the main one: identifying the perception of the employees of a call center on the banking field in Timișoara on the way in which the stress

related to the workplace can affect their emotional and/or physical health, assessing how the occupational stress can affect both the performance and motivation of employees interviewed for the present research.

The general question of the research is the following: *“Is there a link between the negative perception of occupational stress and the option for professional mobility of staff in a banking call center in Timișoara?”*. As we also developed specific objectives, we formulated specific questions for them as well and only after having answered the specific questions, we would be able to find the answer to the main general question. The specific questions are the following: *“What is the perception of the employees of a banking call center located in Timișoara on the way in which the stress related to work can affect their physical and emotional health?”*, *“To what extent can occupational stress influence the motivation and performance of the employees of a call center on the banking field in Timișoara?”*. Based on the answers of the interviewees and our own investigation and analysis, we will expose our response to the general question in the sequence designated to the conclusions of the present article.

The technique used to identify and select the interviewees for the present research was the snowball technique, therefore after finding one individual who accepted to be subject of the research, his relationship with his colleagues led us to discover more and more employees of the same workplace who accepted to participate as well.

Concerning the individuals subject to this research, their age range is framed between 22 and 27 years, 10 of them being between 25 and 29 years old. Two of the 14 subjects belong to generation Z, and 12 fall into generation Y. Generation Y is also called the millennial generation, and the letter Y comes from the English word *youth*, being the first wave of the digital generation born in the world of technology. They readily accept the changes, live in the present (*carpe diem*) and do not like to make long-term plans. The circle of friends of people born in generation Y is more virtual, they easily accept cultural differences and like to live their lives at a fast and adventurous pace (Krishnan et al, 2013). Generation Z starts from 1990 to 2010 and succeeds the generation of millennials, and people born in that range are called digital natives or iGeneration. Since individuals belonging to generation Z were born into the world of technology, it is very important for them to be always surrounded by devices and have continuous access to the virtual environment. This is also reflected in their actions, making it difficult for them to socialize in real life (Bencsik et al. 2016).

Regarding the level of studies, 4 of the employees graduated from the faculty, while 10 also have a master’s degree in diverse fields: letters, management, economics, agronomy, law, pharmacy either in Romania or abroad. Their seniority in the company varies between 1 month (employees who are still on probation,

lasting 3 months) and 3 years. 6 of the interviewed employees have been working in this call center for less than a year, and 8 of them have been in the same job for more than a year. In the table below, *Table 1*, we have presented the factual data collected from the interviewees: age, seniority, level of education, country of origin, professional experience and plans for the near future.

Table 1.**Factual data of the interviewed employees**

Employee	Age (years)	Seniority	Level of education	Country of origin	Professional experience	Plans for near future
S1	22	2 MONTHS	Faculty of Letters	Romania	Seasonal jobs in the US and Germany	Top position inside the call center team
S2	29	6 MONTHS	Faculty and Masters of Letters Faculty of Biochemistry	Romania	Back office and Call center in French	Changing the job with another one inside the company
S3	26	8 MONTHS	Faculty of Letters	Romania	French-English translations	IT job, programming
S4	28	3 YEARS	Faculty and Masters in Management	Tunisia	Waiter / job in the restaurant	Job in Management
S5	37	1 MONTH	Academy of Economic Studies	Romania	Transport / driver	Keeping their current job
S6	35	2 YEARS 5 MONTHS	Faculty and Masters of Letters	Algeria	Back office and Call center in French	Management
S7	27	6 MONTHS	Pharmacy University	Tunisia	Chemist	Entrepreneurship, opening a restaurant
S8	25	1 AN 10 MONTHS	Faculty and Masters in Management	Tunisia	Call center in French	Management
S9	28	2 YEARS 4 MONTHS	Faculty and Masters in Management	Morocco	Unpaid internships	Top position inside the call center team

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND ITS PERCEIVED NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE OF THE EMPLOYEES OF A BANKING CALL CENTER

Employee	Age (years)	Seniority	Level of education	Country of origin	Professional experience	Plans for near future
S10	25	1 AN 11 MONTHS	Faculty of Economics and Masters in Financial Management	Romania	Transport / driver	Job in accounting
S11	22	1 AN 10 MONTHS	Faculty and Masters in Management	Morocco	Videography	Management
S12	29	1AN 10 MONTHS	Faculty of Law and Masters in Management	Tunisia	Call center in French and Waiter / job in restaurant	Top position inside the call center team
S13	25	9 MONTHS	Faculty of Electrical Systems Engineering and Masters of Systems Management	Romania	N/A	Keeping their current job
S14	28	12 MONTHS	Faculty and Masters of Agronomy	Romania	Waiter / job in restaurant and Back office in French	Keeping their current job

Data source: collected from the interviewees by authors

Concerning the topics of the discussions generated by the interview's questions, we have defined them below. They have also been theorized by Jeremy Stranks (2005) in his book "Stress at work: Management and prevention", as follows:

T1 - Personal experience: People are different in their attitude, personality, character, motivation, and ability to cope with stressors. Depending on personal experiences, stress at work can be, in fact, the response of each individual to the situations they encounter outside the work schedule (financial, family, health problems).

T2 - Work experience: Occupational stress can be closely linked to career progress or evolution; therefore, the employee's work experience can influence the stress at work today. Most people work in the workplace based on experience, using work practices gained over several years.

T3 - Work schedule: Studies on the physical and psychological effects of atypical work have shown that approximately 75% of shift workers feel isolated

from family and friends. Part-time employees may be treated less favorably than full-time employees in terms of leave entitlements, promotion, and training opportunities.

T4 - Work Rhythm: *The Scale of Occupational Stress: The Bristol Stress and Health at Work Study CRR 265/2000* (Smith et al., 2000) estimated that there are approximately 5 million people suffering from varying levels of stress occupational. Among the research results we mention: an association between high levels of reported stress and work-specific factors such as excessive workloads; The effects of high levels of occupational stress have been linked to back pain and poor mental health, along with health-related activities such as smoking and alcohol.

T5 - Performance: Motivation is the element of human behavior that causes people to move on. Bonus schemes and incentives in various forms are developed at the organizational level in order to improve the motivation of employees to achieve certain levels of performance. If the individual fails to achieve these goals or is not rewarded for his or her performance, stressful situations can arise, and resentment can occur among employees.

T6 - Physical health: Individual sources of stress, along with the circumstances at work and the patterns of behavior of each employee can lead to dissatisfaction at work, low aspirations, smoking and excessive drinking. This can lead to health problems such as depression or heart problems. Organizational symptoms arising from stress at work include high workforce fluctuations, difficulties in interpersonal relationships, and high absenteeism.

T7 - Professional mobility: A high level of employment stress for employees can lead to voluntary leaving the job and looking for another job that is not similar to the previous one.

Results

The first question of the interview guide focused on the personal experiences of the interviewees, as we aimed to allow the participants in this research to describe themselves in a subjective way, to tell us both pleasant and unpleasant situations they have experienced throughout their educational path, but also to let us know what is their perception on the experience of speaking in a language other than the native one. The main discursive cores exposed during the discussion on the first question were: self-perception, interpersonal relationships in the family, perception of education and the experience of speaking a foreign language. Regarding the first two discursive cores, most of the subjects reported positively and considered that they have a good relationship with the

family members. On the other hand, we could divide the perception of education by nationality, so five out of seven respondents of North African nationality said that the best time of their high school years was when they finished their studies because this meant that they would leave the country of origin. Furthermore, regarding the educational path, two out of seven interviewees of Romanian nationality talked about the unpleasant experiences they had with teachers who, apparently, applied teaching methods used during the communist period:

The whole elementary school, I had a math teacher, he was very severe, he started teaching in the period before '89, he was trained in communist schools, in communist faculties and he still had a conception, a mentality from that period, when everyone had to stand up straight in front of the teacher, and it was the time when we took such, we received, so, corrections, but it rarely happened, but it happened a few times when we received corrections with a stick on the palm to be precise [physical abuse]. (S2, 29 years old, 6 months of seniority in the company, Romanian)

Concerning the language learning at the workplace, many authors have explored this topic and identified the job as a nucleus of socialization through language, which, according to Duff (2007: 310), means that beginners or employees who do not have much experience with the language which they have to work with will very likely gain communicative and linguistic competences only by belonging to a group speaking a foreign language. There is little research that explores language learning in the workplace. Moreover, most existing studies, according to Strömmer (2016, 2), explore how newly recruited employees acquire a vocabulary specific to the job activity in areas such as engineering, healthcare, medicine, and law. Both Strömmer (2016: 2) and Angouri (2014: 1-9) claim that low-skilled work positions (entry-level, basic jobs for immigrants) is not sufficiently subject to research and would deserve more attention. Regarding the present research, we asked our interviewees about their experience to learn and speak a foreign language, both in their daily life and at the workplace. Based on the answers received, the employees had to learn foreign languages by necessity and already started studying some of them in school.

The experience of speaking in another language ... At first it was a little difficult for me to learn, but after getting used to it, I found it interesting, the fact that I can speak another language, that I can communicate with other people. I can also speak French, English and Romanian. I speak

French best, then normally English, but I haven't practiced the language very often and I kind of forgot it and then it's Romanian. When I came to Romania, I thought that people speak French here and after that I was shocked ... I saw that people speak another language, I asked what language it was and they said it was Romanian, and then I started to use English until I learned Romanian. Now I really speak Romanian better than English because I use it in my daily life. (S4, 28 years old, 3 years of seniority in the company, Tunisian)

I've been studying Arabic, French and English since I was little, at school, so three different languages since I was little. We had to learn Arabic with the rules of conjugation, grammar ... the same for French and English. So, there were three languages at the same time. And honestly, when I came to Romania, I never thought that I would be able to speak Romanian as well or that I would be able to know the language. But that has changed over time. (S9, 28 years old, 2 years and 4 months of seniority in the company, Moroccan)

The second question aimed to generate a discussion on the overview of the professional experience of the interviewees. We focused on five discursive cores: the first official remuneration received, the expectations at work, the professional experience in Romania and abroad, but also the previous experience in call centers. The professional experience of the employees who participated in this research is quite extensive and extends to several fields of activity (pharmacy, hospitality, transportation, education, etc.). The aspirations, the future desires of the employees are also varied, from becoming an airplane pilot to opening their own restaurant.

The first money that I earned ... before I was a DJ, I sold things on the internet, that's how I earned my money, but my first salary was in Tunisia, as a pharmacist. I remember traveling with my first salary. (S7, 27 years, 6 months of seniority in the company, Tunisian)

Six of the interviewees have previous experience in call centers, either in Romania or in their country of origin. Only one interviewee reported positively on previous jobs in call centers, while the others stated that they did not have very pleasant events working in call centers:

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND ITS PERCEIVED NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE OF THE EMPLOYEES OF A BANKING CALL CENTER

We also had to handle phone calls when the technicians from France called us, probably ten calls a day per agent, and the calls were very easy, because we were talking from business to business, that is, we were talking to someone who knew what the work meant, what to do, they just asked us if the site had recovered or not, or they asked, for example, which area is impacted and not working. (S6, 35 years, 2 years and 5 months of seniority in the company, Algerian)

Although the work schedule is atypical, with employees working shifts from Monday to Saturday, between 9 am and 9 pm, this does not seem to bother them, but rather they see it as an opportunity. When they work on Saturdays, they are offered a day off during the week, which they often use to solve personal problems. The planning of shifts and breaks is developed by the manager, according to certain algorithms, but it also takes into account the preferences of employees.

Most of the time I think the work schedule is quite balanced, because the work shift weeks are different and we don't have to start every week at that time, but sometimes I think it's important to be able to ask for a day off or to be able to make certain changes to the schedule depending on the personal issues you need to resolve. (S1, 22 years old, 2 months of seniority in the company, Romanian)

One of the employees stated that one of the aspects discussed at the interview was the shift work schedule and that he was confirmed that he could choose his own shifts. To date, this has been respected by his supervisor.

It was something I negotiated at the beginning, and we discussed working shifts after I finished my classes. I remember that day, I didn't negotiate my salary, I didn't negotiate anything. Just the fact that I have to do my studies, and that they are my priority. I was clear on that. And I think if I didn't work in the shifts I wanted, I would resign from the start. (S8, 25 years, 1 year and 10 months of seniority in the company, Tunisian)

The interviewed employees confirmed that after the lucrative activity they feel slight headaches, neck, eyes, back, ears, but consider that it is a normal thing, considering that the services provided are carried out exclusively in front of a computer and through headphones.

Yes, the call center is a very stressful and demanding job, that is, sometimes with many, many, many headaches. It has happened to me that after a day of work with many, many calls, my head hurt. That is, the stress that persists after you finish work, but otherwise I had no other physical reactions. (S10, 25 years, 1 year and 11 months of seniority in the company, Romanian)

Basically, yes, there's a back pain, maybe a headache. We try a tea, meanwhile we straighten our voices. Because, even talking for eight hours now is not always continuous, but most of the time, you don't sit silent, so you practically talk. And it's a mental rather than a physical consumption, and the fact that you're staying only on the chair, somehow, also affects that. (S13, 25 years old, 9 months of seniority in the company, Romanian)

Regarding the connection between health problems and occupational stress, it has been discovered through other research that most of the symptoms of overwork are manifested in the upper extremity of the body (WRUE - work-related upper extremity): pain, sensitivity, swelling, numbness, loss of control/function in fingers, hands, forearms, shoulders, upper back and neck (National Research Council and The Institute of Medicine, 2001).

In the semi-structured interview guide that we developed for this research, we did not use the term "occupational stress", as we did not want to induce to the participants the idea that their daily lucrative work is a stressful one. However, we got answers in which the participants themselves stated that working in a call center is stressful and very demanding. The main cause of stress is, according to the answers received, the high workload and the flexibility that employees must have when handling a normal, pleasant call, following a difficult situation they faced a few seconds ago. The time that agents spend between two calls (when the call flow is continuous) is only 10 seconds, which is perceived as insufficient and as the main reason for the decrease in performance and efficiency.

The volume of calls differs depending on the number of activities on which the employee carries out his activity, the length of the calls, but also the period of the week or day. Most employees prefer to work in the morning, because then they feel the most productive, although it is the time of day when there are the most calls. Only one employee was positive about the pace of work, considering that the volume of calls is not very high.

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND ITS PERCEIVED NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE OF THE EMPLOYEES OF A BANKING CALL CENTER

I can't say it seems like a lot to me, because most calls are pretty short, and calls are pretty easy to handle... Of course, I prefer short calls because they involve easier tasks, more satisfied customers, don't require a lot of thinking on my side. Although I prefer short calls, this involves a larger number of calls, because the time allows us to take more calls. (S1, 22 years old, 2 months of seniority in the company, Romanian)

After a day of work in which employees have a large number of calls and are very tired, they resort to various coping strategies such as walking in nature, but also to isolating from technology and other people.

Yes, I think in August last year we got 105 calls a day. After work, I didn't want to hear about technology, anything, no TV, no personal phone, nothing, so I took a cold shower and went out for a walk and didn't interact with anyone. I felt very tired, because no problem is similar to another of the clients, and you get involved in the things you do, and 105 is a pretty big number.... (S14, 28 years old, 1 year of seniority in the company, Romanian)

Also, one of the skills that a call center employee must have is flexibility. They must be able to get through a difficult call without unloading the negative energy to the next customer. Most employees claim that they are able to do this, but with great effort from their side or after having gain some experience.

This is the nature of the service, this is the nature of the job, but it costs you a little, so an investment of this energetic and emotional power, so that you do not affect the others... somehow the next client will not have to be affected by your condition, because you, previously, you had to interact with a more difficult situation. So, with effort, we succeed. (S2, 29 years old, 6 months of seniority in the company, Romanian)

Both the performance and the productivity of the employees are a critical point when evaluating the activity of a call center. However, following the discussions, we can conclude that from the desire to achieve the optimum level of productivity, the performance and motivation of employees are often neglected. This was especially pointed out by employees with more than two years of experience in the company, as they felt an almost double increase in the number of calls received daily compared to the beginning of the employment contract. Performance is almost always analyzed correctly, but most of the time

it is not rewarded accordingly. As we do not have access to the information related to the budget allocated to this type of financial rewards, we cannot comment on the possibility of the company offering them. However, employees would even appreciate the existence of non-financial rewards such as greeting cards, team buildings (even in the virtual environment if the current situation does not allow their physical development). Employee performance is monitored by randomly listened calls and analyzing them through a coaching form. Following the analysis performed by the supervisors, the employees receive several filled in coaching forms. We asked the interviewees if they thought their performance had ever been evaluated incorrectly, and two of them confirmed this:

I think once yes, once I was wronged. At one point I wanted to be advanced in the project and an opportunity opened up to become a coach. Of course, I think four people applied for this opportunity, they were my colleagues, of course, but I was 100% sure it would be me, because the colleagues who applied came after me and I didn't think they would take the calls better. than me, so I was perfect at the time. I thought I was going to be the coach, but when I found out the result, I found out that there was another person who came after me with 4-5 months and he became, he won the competition that little one, and he became the coach. It seems to me that I was unfit for performance then, but then I solved it and moved on. (S4, 28 years old, 3 years of seniority in the company, Tunisian)

After discussing the performance and how it is evaluated, we continued with the rewards and benefits that employees receive, whether financial or non-financial. Among the benefits listed by employees we found: the ability to use the laptop and work phone for personal purposes, private health insurance, a performance bonus received once a year and the ability to receive money back for various products or services. However, in terms of financial reward, the interviewees reported more negatively or neutrally, as most were rewarded only non-financially, with praise and congratulations.

Apart from the salary, I honestly didn't receive anything. Salary and thank you. We also have private health insurance, but I've never used it. There is also an annual performance bonus, but everyone gets it. But some colleagues, for example, received a voucher, maybe once a year. That's when I started, they gave it to a few colleagues, but after that they stopped, they didn't give it anymore. (S6, 35 years, 2 years, and 5 months senior in the company, Algerian)

Conclusions

Following the analysis of the research results, we can conclude that the interviewed employees perceive the very high workflow as the main factor contributing to the stress at the workplace. Although the number of telephonic interactions depends on the season or on the time of the day, the employees feel that the team is understaffed, and that they are overused by management to achieve the organization's targets. It is for the same reason why sometimes, due to fatigue, they are tempted to extend the calls so as not to answer immediately one call after another, so that performance and productivity is negatively impacted.

Concerning the connection between the findings and the answer to the research question, we can state that there is, indeed, a link between the negative perception of occupational stress and the option towards professional mobility, but the latest is mainly influenced by other factors such as the goals and future projections of each individual, the professional experience and how the employees identify themselves with the values of the company they work for. Strategies that could be implemented to increase the employee retention could be based on the satisfaction and motivation at work, opportunities for career advancement, rewards, and recognition. We would thus suggest the creation of internal surveys to be sent to all the employees and filled in anonymously – through this means, they could be given the chance to express their wishes and ideas for service improvement, but also for individual well-being.

REFERENCES

- Angouri, J. (2014). *Multilingualism in the workplace: Language practices in multilingual contexts*. *Multilingua*, 33(1–2), 1-9.
- Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., and Sanz-Vergel, A. I. (2014). Burnout and work engagement: The JD–R approach. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 1, 389-411. (doi:10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-031413-091235, 20/03/2021).
- Beehr, T. A., Newman, J. E. (1978). Job stress, employee health, and organizational effectiveness: A facet analysis, model and literature review, *Personnel Psychology*, 31: 665-699.
- Bencsik, A., Horváth-Csikós, G., and Juhász, T. (2016). Y and Z Generations at Workplaces. *Journal of Competitiveness*, 8(3).
- Beyer J and Marshall J (1981). *The interpersonal dimension of collegiality*, *Nursing Outlook* 29(11), 662-665.
- Cameron, K., Bright, D., and Caza, A. (2004). Exploring the Relationships between Organizational Virtuousness and Performance. *American Behavioral Scientist* 47(6), 1-24.

- Duff, P. A. (2007). *Second language socialization as sociocultural theory: Insights and issues*. *Language Teaching*, 40(4), 309-319.
- Ewald, O. (1997), *Das Burnout-Syndrom*. *ErgoMed*, 21: 93-96.
- Folkman, S. (2009). Commentary on the Special Section "Theory-Based Approaches to Stress and Coping": Questions, Answers, Issues and Next Steps in Stress and Coping Research, *European Psychologist* 14, 72-77.
- Godfrey, C.M. Harrison, M.B. Lysaght, R. Lamb, M. Graham, I.D. and P. Oakley (2011). Care of Self – Care by Other – Care of Other: The Meaning of Self-Care from Research, Practice, Policy, and Industry Perspective, *International Journal of Evidence-Based Healthcare* 9, 3-24.
- Ivancevich, J. M., and Matteson, M. T. (1980). *Stress and work*. Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman.
- Jalowiec A and Powers M (1981). Stress and coping in hypertensive and emergency patients, *Nursing Research* 30,10.
- Jamal, M. (2005). Burnout among Canadian and Chinese employees: A cross-cultural study, *European Management Review*, 2: 224-230.
- Katz, D. and Kahn, R. L. (1978). *The social psychology of organizations*, New York: Wiley.
- Krishnan, S. K., Bopaiah, S., Bajaj, D., and Prasad R. (2013). Organization, Generation, and Communication – Infosys Experience. *NHRD Journal*. 10, 85-93.
- Lazarus R., Avenll J and Opton E (1974). The psychology of coping. *Issues of research and assessment, Coping and Adaptation (Coelho G, Hamburg D and Adams J eds)*, Basic Books, New York.
- Maas, J. (2001). *Power Sleep*, Quill Books, New York.
- Mancmi J, Lavecchia C and Qegg R. (1983). Graduate nursing students and stress, *Journal of Nursmg Education* 22(8), 329-334.
- Maslach C, Jackson SE. (1981). The measurement of experienced burnout, *Journal of Occupational Behaviour*, 2: 99-113.
- National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine (2001). Musculoskeletal disorders and the workplace: Low back and upper extremities. Panel on Musculoskeletal Disorders and the Workplace, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, *National Academy Press*, Washington, DC.
- Schaufeli W, Enzmann D. (1999). *The Burnout Companion to Study and Practice: A Critical Analysis*, London: Taylor and Francis Ltd.
- Schuler, R. S. (1980), Definition and conceptualization of stress in organizations, *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 25: 184-215.
- Seaward, Brian, Luke (2018), *Managing Stress. Principles and strategies for Health and Well-Being*, *Paramount Wellness Institute*, Boulder, Colorado.
- Seco, V. M. M., and Lopes, M. P. (2013). Professionals calling in lifelong learning centers. *Journal of Industrial Engineering and Management*, 6: 668-685.
- Smith, A., Johal, S., and Wadsworth, E. (2000). *The Scale of Occupational Stress: The Bristol Stress and Health at Work Study: HSE Books Sudbury*.
- Stranks, J. W. (2005). *Stress at work: Management and prevention*, Oxford Burlington, MA: Elsevier/Butterworth- Heinemann, 69-70.
- Strömmer, M. (2016). *Affordances and constraints: Second language learning in cleaning work*. *Multilingua*, 35(6), 697-721.